



א' - ו' אלול תשפ"ב August 28 - September 3, 2022



## • In This Week's Parashah

- ◆ The parashah focuses on leadership and justice. Benei Yisrael must appoint שופטים (shoftim, judges) and שוטרים (shotrim, officers). We are told: צֶדֶק צֶדֶק תִּרְדּוּ (tzedek tzedek tirdof), which means to run after justice like we're chasing it.
- ◆ There is a mitzvah to listen to the kohanim and shoftim.
- ◆ In the future, a king of Benei Yisrael may not own too much gold or silver, own too many horses, or marry too many wives. A king needs to fear God, follow the Torah, and not "raise his heart" above everyone else.
- ◆ Benei Yisrael must stay away from magic and sorcery, and beware of false prophets.
- ◆ If a person kills someone by accident, they have to go to one of the עָרֵי מִקְלָט (arei miklat, cities of refuge).
- ◆ Courts need to rule based on honest testimony from more than one witness.
- ◆ When it's time for war, not everyone has to fight. Before battle, Benei Yisrael should propose peace. They must be careful to only destroy enemies who pose a threat, but not innocent people or natural resources.
- ◆ If someone is mysteriously killed in the middle of nowhere, the leaders of the nearest town perform a special ritual called עֵגְלָה עֲרוּפָה (eglah arufah).





## מִדְרָשׁ • Midrash

Before Benei Yisrael go into battle, the כֹּהֵן (kohen, priest) will give a speech, encouraging the people to trust in God. Then, the שׁוֹטְרִים (shotrim, officers) will announce that some people can skip the fighting: anyone who just built a new house, or just planted a new vineyard, or just got engaged to get married, and....

### Devarim 20:8

The officers go on speaking to the troops and say, "Is there anyone afraid and weak of heart? They can go back to their home, so they don't discourage everyone else."

### דברים כ:ח

וַיִּסְפוּ הַשּׁוֹטְרִים לְדַבֵּר אֶל הָעָם  
וַאֲמָרוּ מִי הָאִישׁ הַיָּרֵא וְרֵף הַלֵּב  
יָלֵךְ וַיָּשָׁב לְבֵיתוֹ וְלֹא יִמַּסְ אֶת-לֵב  
אֲחֵיו בְּלִבָּבוֹ:

War is scary! You'd think most people would be frightened. Is there something else going on with the person who is "afraid and weak of heart"?

Bzzzz  
A lot of midrashim are  
bugged by something  
unusual in the Torah text



### Mishnah Sotah 8:5

R. Akiva says: "Afraid and weak of heart" is what it sounds like—a person who is too scared to stand in the battle and see a drawn sword.

R. Yosei HaGelili says: "Afraid and weak of heart" is someone who is afraid of the sins they have done. The Torah gave all these other reasons also (new house, vineyard, etc.) so that a sinner could leave with other people, and not have to publicly embarrass themselves because of their sins.

### מסכת סוטה פרק ח משנה ה

רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא אוֹמֵר הַיָּרֵא וְרֵף  
הַלֵּב בְּמַשְׁמַעוֹ, שְׁאִינוֹ יָכוֹל  
לַעֲמֹד בְּקִשְׁרֵי הַמִּלְחָמָה וּלְרֹאוֹת  
חֶרֶב שְׁלוּפָה.

רַבִּי יוֹסֵי הַגְּלִילִי אוֹמֵר הַיָּרֵא וְרֵף  
הַלֵּב זֶהוּ הַמַּתְיָירָא מִן הָעֵבִירוֹת  
שֶׁבָּדָדוֹ, לְפִיכָּה תִּלְתָּהּ לוֹ הַתּוֹרָה  
אֶת כָּל אֵלּוּ שִׁיחֲזוֹר בְּגִלְלָן...

The pasuk explains that people who are afraid should leave the battle so they don't discourage everyone else. The mishnah presents two options about the kinds of fear that could have this impact.

- ◆ How could one person's fears affect the other soldiers?
- ◆ If a soldier can't have enough courage even to look at a sword, will they be useful in battle? What can we learn from this about facing our own challenges in life?
- ◆ What do you think it means for a person to be afraid of their sins? How do you think that would affect them in war? How might their sins affect the other soldiers?



## פְּרָשְׁנוֹת • Commentary

### Devarim 17:14-15

When you come to the land that God your Lord is giving you, and inherit it and settle there, you might say, "Let's have a king, like all the nations around me."

**Som tasim a king over yourself**, one chosen by God your Lord...

### דברים יז:יד-טו

כִּי תָבֹא אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ  
נָתַן לָךְ וַיְרִשָׁתָהּ וַיֵּשְׁבָתָהּ בָּהּ וְאָמַרְתָּ  
אֲשִׁימָה עָלַי מֶלֶךְ כְּכָל הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר  
סָבִיבָתִי:

שׁוֹם תָּשִׂים עָלֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר ה'  
אֱלֹקֶיךָ בּוֹ...

### Is it good for Benei Yisrael to have a king?

A lot depends on how you understand the words "som tasim." They literally mean something like "set, yes set." When the Torah doubles a verb (action word), it often means that this action is something you **really** should do.

On the other hand, Sefer Devarim emphasizes that we aren't supposed to be "like all the nations." So, the request doesn't sound ideal!

Rambam and Ibn Ezra have different understandings. Try to see how each one reads "som tasim."



### Rambam (Spain and Egypt, 850 years ago)

Positive mitzvah #137 is to appoint a king to lead us, as it says "som tasim a king over yourself."

The Sifrei Devarim teaches that Benei Yisrael were given three special mitzvot when they entered Eretz Yisrael: to appoint a king, to build the Beit Ha-Mikdash, and to destroy Amalek.

### רמב"ם ספר המצוות מצות עשה קע"ג

היא שצונו למנות עלינו מלך יקבץ כל אמתנו וינהיגנו. והוא אמרו יתברך "שום תשים עליך מלך."

ובכר קדם לנו לשונם בספרי, שלש מצות נצטוו ישראל בכניסתן לארץ: למנות עליהם מלך, ולבנות להם בית הבחירה, ולהכרית זרעו של עמלק.

### Ibn Ezra (Spain, 900 years ago)

"Som tasim"—this is optional.

### אבן עזרא

"שום תשים" - רשות.



Send us your thoughts or questions from learning the parashah. We'll write back to you, and some will get published in future issues of Devash! Write to us at [devash@hadar.org](mailto:devash@hadar.org)

- ◆ What are the pros and cons to having a king?
- ◆ What do you think of the request in the first pasuk to be "like all the nations"? Could this be evidence for one of the positions above? What other evidence can you find in the pesukim?
- ◆ Read Devarim 17:15-20 in a humash. Does it seem like the Torah is excited about the idea of a king? What do you notice about the rules for kings? Could a king who follows these rules help Benei Yisrael to serve God?



## בואו נדבר על זה • Tell Me More About This!

What happens when Benei Yisrael actually ask for a king?

We can fast-forward to the time when they first make this request, in the days of שמואל הנביא (Shmuel Ha-Navi, Shmuel the prophet). Shmuel tells God, and God says:



## Shmuel Alef 8:7

## שמואל א ח:ז

"Listen to everything the people say to you.  
For it is not you they have rejected, but it is Me  
that they have rejected from ruling over them!"

שִׁמְעוּ בְּקוֹל הָעָם לְכָל אֲשֶׁר יֹאמְרוּ  
אֵלַיִךְ כִּי לֹא אֹתָךְ מָאַסוּ כִּי אֶתִּי מָאַסוּ  
מִמְּלֹךְ עֲלֵיהֶם.

- ◆ Whose position does this seem to support in the פְּרִשְׁנוֹת / Commentary debate (on the opposite page), Rambam or Ibn Ezra?

Shmuel says that asking for a human king to be like the other nations is nothing other than rejecting God as the true King!

Shmuel then goes on to warn the people about all the terrible things kings do to their people, like turning people into slaves, making children join the army, and seizing people's land. Shmuel warns them also that, when their king eventually turns evil, God will not help them.

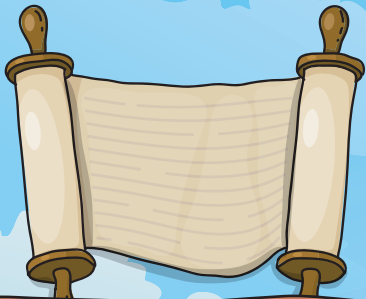
Still, Benei Yisrael are not swayed. They want a king. Because of this, Shmuel ends up crowning Shaul as the first king over Benei Yisrael.





## הלכה • Halakhah

Mitzvot are usually classified in one of two categories:

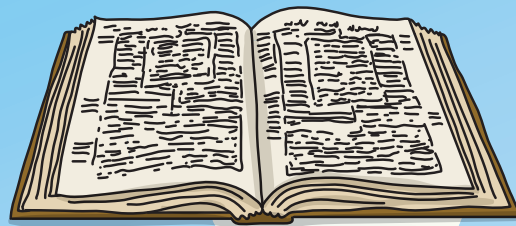


מִצְוֹת דְּאוֹרַיְתָא (mitzvot de-orayta)

"De-orayta" means "from the Torah" in Aramaic, and mitzvot de-orayta are mitzvot that come directly from the Torah or from Moshe. For example, putting a mezuzah on your door comes straight from a pasuk in the Torah (we saw it a few weeks ago, in the Devash Halakhah section for Va'ethanan). Sometimes, the mitzvah is very clearly stated in the pesukim, and sometimes it's less obvious, and חז"ל (Hazal, our Rabbis) learn it from clues in the pesukim.

**How do Hazal have the power to make mitzvot? Why do we listen to them?**

One reason, the Gemara (Shabbat 23a) explains, is this pasuk in our parashah.



מִצְוֹת דְּרַבָּנָן (mitzvot de-rabbanan)

"De-rabbanan" means "from our Rabbis" in Aramaic, and mitzvot de-rabbanan are additional mitzvot created by prophets, Sages, or by community agreement mostly up until the times of Hazal. For example, lighting Hanukkah candles or hearing Megillat Esther on Purim are both mitzvot de-rabbanan.

### Devarim 17:11

You shall not turn away from what they teach you, to the right or to the left.

### דברים יז:יא

לֹא תִסּוּר מִן הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר יְגִידוּ לָךְ יְמִין וּשְׂמָאל.



Here, God commands us to listen to our שופטים (shoftim, judges) and Torah leaders. So there's actually a mitzvah de-orayta to follow mitzvot de-rabbanan!

### De-orayta vs. de-rabbanan

- ◆ Sometimes, different rules apply de-orayta vs. de-rabbanan. For example, saying the הַמּוֹצִיא (HaMotzi) blessing before eating bread is de-rabbanan, but saying בְּרַכַּת הַמָּזוֹן (Birkat Ha-Mazon) after eating bread is de-orayta. So if you aren't sure if you said Hamotzi before you started eating, you don't go back and say it. But if you're not sure if you said Birkat Ha-Mazon after you ate, you say it even if you might be repeating it.
- ◆ It's not always so clear whether a mitzvah is de-orayta or de-rabbanan. Sometimes, it's a מַחְלֶקֶת (mahloket, debate)!



## דְּבָרָה שֶׁל דִּיּוּן • One-Minute Debate

### How to play:

Here is a topic for debate along with some suggested arguments, but feel free to come up with your own.

- ◆ Assign people to the "Agree" or "Disagree" sides.
- ◆ Each side gets 30 seconds to make their case.
- ◆ At the end, the group votes on a winner.

**Debate: It would be cool to be a judge.**

**Agree**



### Agree!

- It's a really important role for making sure that society is fair.
- Imagine all the interesting cases you would get to hear. Never boring!

**Disagree**



### Disagree!

- Lots of situations aren't clear-cut. What if you got a complicated case and made a wrong ruling?
- It would be hard to always be fair, especially if people tried to offer you bribes to get you on their side.



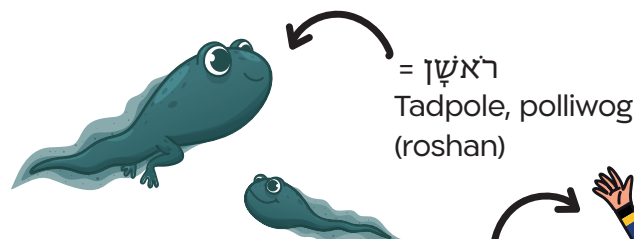
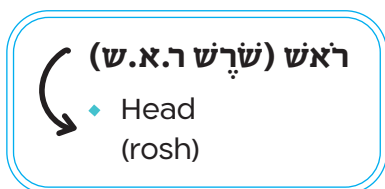
## רִגְעַן שֶׁל עִבְרִית • A Moment of Hebrew

### Devarim 18:4

You shall also give him (the kohen) the **first** fruits of your new grain and wine and oil, and the **first** shearing of your sheep.

### דברים יח:ד

וְרִאשִׁית דִּגְגְּנְךָ תִּירֶשֶׁף וְיִצְהָרְךָ  
וְרִאשִׁית גֶּזַע צֹאנְךָ תִּתֵּן לוֹ:



ראש/ראשת ממשלה  
Prime Minister (rosh/roshat memshalah)



אבן ראשה  
Keystone, the stone that is placed in the middle of an arch (even roshah)



ראשי תבות  
Acronym (rashei teivot)



### Find the Word!

In Bereishit 28, someone dreams of an object whose "head" reaches the sky. Who is the dreamer and what is the object?





## טַעַמֵי הַפְּקָדָא • Torah Trop

We have learned all the notes that you will find in the Torah—great job! If you go back and review, you will see that almost all of the notes show up on the accented syllable in the word. In fact, part of the way you can figure out how to pronounce a word in the Torah is to look for the note, which will tell you which part of the word to say a little bit louder and stronger.

But we learned about five notes that always appear at either the beginning or the end of the word, **even if the accent is in a different place**.

Here's a quick review:



This can be tricky for people learning Torah reading, or just for anyone who wants to use the notes to help them pronounce everything correctly. That's why many printed versions of the humash double these notes. To make it easier for us, one of the notes goes where it is supposed to—at the beginning or the end—and the other goes on the accent. Our parashah has examples of all five of these notes that can be doubled. Check it out:

דברים יז:ב      דברים יט:ה      דברים יז:ח  
לִמְעוֹן      בִּיעֹר      נָגַע

דברים יז:ה      דברים יט:ג  
עָשׂוּ      הִדְרֹךְ

These aren't actually double notes! The real note is at the end or the beginning (we showed it in black), and the extra mark (we showed it in pink) is just there to help you out so you don't say AH-su instead of a-SU. If you were ever wondering why these notes sometimes double up—mystery solved!

Yetiv is also always before the word, but it only appears on words that have the accent on the first (or only) syllable, so we aren't discussing it here.



## שאלות השבוע • Parashah Scavenger Hunt

The answers to the first seven questions can be found in the matching numbered aliyah in the Torah reading. **The answers to the last three are harder and can come from anywhere in the parashah.**

### aliyot:

- 1) Devarim 16:18 to 17:13
- 2) 17:14 to 17:20
- 3) 18:1 to 18:5
- 4) 18:6 to 18:13
- 5) 18:14 to 19:13
- 6) 19:14 to 20:9
- 7) 20:10 to 21:9

*Good luck!*

1 What does our parashah say that God hates?

2 Why shouldn't a king have a lot of horses?

3 Which three parts of an animal does the כֹּהֵן (kohen, priest) get when someone slaughters meat to eat?



4 In this aliyah, what are the problematic practices of the people living in Eretz Canaan?

5 Our parashah gives a specific example of how a person might kill someone else accidentally, with a tool. What is it?

6 What four groups of people are allowed to go home when the people go to war?

7 When an army is attacking a city, what are they not allowed to cut down?

8 What are all the leadership positions mentioned in our parashah?

9 What word appears in identical form twice in a row in our parashah?

10 What two numbers of witnesses does the Torah explicitly approve of?



\*  
Look for the answers on page 12!





## • **Who Were Our Sages?** • כִּי הָיוּ חֲכָמֵינוּ

**Shmuel Ha-Navi** was one of the early prophets of Benei Yisrael. His life is described in the two books with his name, Shmuel Alef and Shmuel Bet.

Before Shmuel was born, his mother, Hannah, wanted a child more than anything in the world. God promised her she would have one, and it was Shmuel. After he grew up a little, she brought him to the mishkan in Shiloh to serve there with the כֹּהֲנִים (kohanim, priests). While sleeping one night, God began talking to Shmuel, and he became a נָבִיא (navi, prophet).

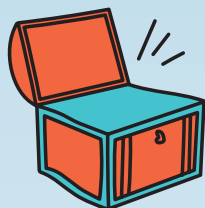
Shmuel hoped that his sons would be able to take his place after he was gone, but they did not follow in his ways and did not judge fairly. The people wanted a king instead, and even though Shmuel didn't want there to be a king (as we saw on p. 4), God told him to crown Shaul. Shmuel loved Shaul and went on to be one of Shaul's advisors, but quit when Shaul stopped obeying God.

Shaul relied on Shmuel so much that, after Shmuel died, he tried to speak with Shmuel's ghost. This is exactly the kind of magic our parashah says is not allowed (Devarim 18:11)! Shmuel's ghost told the king that his reign was over and he was going to die. Sure enough, Shaul was killed in battle and David became the new king.

According to R. Yohanan in Berakhot 31a, Shmuel was one of the greatest prophets of all time. He is grouped together with Moshe and Aharon in Tehillim 99:6.







## קָה זָה • What's Going On Here?

The עֵגְלָה עֲרוּפָה (eglah arufah) ritual was a ceremony for when a person was killed mysteriously in the middle of nowhere (Devarim 21:1-9).

1. When a dead body was found, elders and judges would measure to find the closest town.
2. The elders of that town would take a calf that had never performed work and bring it down to the water. There, they would kill it by chopping its neck.
3. The town elders would wash their hands over the calf, and say, "Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see it done."
4. They would ask for forgiveness from God.

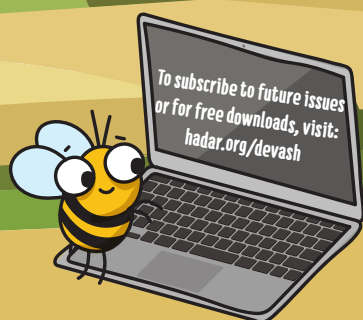


### What was the purpose of this ceremony?

- ◆ Ramban explains that an eglah arufah was a special קָרְבָּן (korban, sacrifice) to get forgiveness, similar to the goat that is pushed off a cliff on Yom Kippur.
- ◆ Rambam explains that this ceremony was a practical way to draw attention to what had happened. The publicity could help the authorities solve the murder case, by encouraging witnesses to come forward.

## Parashah Scavenger Hunt Answers:

1. Putting up a מַצֵּבָה (matzeivah, stone monument) for idolatry (16:22)
2. Because they might lead him to bring the people back to Egypt (17:16)
3. Shank, cheeks, stomach (18:3)
4. Different kinds of magic and sorcery (18:10-11)
5. Someone might be chopping wood in a forest and the blade might fly off the handle of the ax—וְנָשַׁל הַבִּרְזֶל—מִן הָעֵץ (though this could also mean that the ax might cause a wood chip to fly out of the tree!) (19:5)
6. 1) Someone who has built a house but not yet dedicated it; 2) Someone who has planted a vineyard but not yet tasted of it; 3) Someone who is engaged but not yet married; 4) Someone who is afraid (20:5-8)
7. Trees with edible fruit (20:19-20)
8. שֹׁפְטִים (shoftim, judges) (16:18, 17:9, 17:12, 19:17-18, 21:2); שְׁטָרִים (shotrim, officers) (16:18, 20:5-9); כֹּהֲנִים (kohanim, priests) (17:9, 17:12, 17:18, 18:1, 18:3, 19:17, 20:2, 21:5); מֶלֶךְ (melekh, king) (17:14); לֵוִיִּם (Levi'im, members of the tribe of Levi) (18:1, 18:6-7); נָבִיא (navi, prophet) (18:15-22); זִקְנֵי הָעִיר (ziknei ha-ir, the elders of the city) (19:12, 21:2-4, 21:6).
9. צֶדֶק צֶדֶק (tzedek tzedek, justice justice) (16:20)
10. Two and three (17:6, 19:15)



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